



i magazine

[illegible]

John Tandy Brenda Harris

~~John B.~~

AVE

Wetzel
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Carol

Shirley

Fixx "92"
Norma Lates
Michael Keegan
Bill

Onyx O'Brien - Canon
Debbie Ome
Glenn Roberts

Janice Green

Heather

You blow dust and ash upon my fragil wings of truth
cupped hands whip across the purple air
smokey room
zombiefied expressions,
glances fleeting
hand to mouth
hairs cling together, like minutes or seconds
which smear together
like snowflakes in the palm
cold and wet like a brief memory
experienced but never remembered
I grew wings out of my creativity
fragile but colorful
excepted falsehoods
I try to reveal the inner lining
of my liquid feelings
bantering back and forth
one word represents truth
one word represents lies .
your grinning acceptance of the lies
disturbs my tranquility

M.E.

i

1992

i magazine is published by the division of humanities, mount wachusett
community college, gardner ma 01440

contributors: students and alumni of the college are encouraged to contribute essays, short stories, poems. all mss must be typed written. please deliver mss to i magazine, c/o division of humanities, mount wachusett community college, or to mr. marley, rm 366.

i staff

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mark babineau
laurie beland
tom belcastro
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adviser, arthur marley

cover design, heather goguen

special thanks to: norma gates, sheila langley, gary lee and joe stiso.

In dark of night I sowed
some morning glory seeds
and they hung full with buds,
giant ropes of rosary beads.

The flowers then yawned open
into small ponds of blue,
fluttered in a passing breeze
and off the vine they flew!

Like drops of painted water,
gravity abused,
they fell straight up into the sky
and left the world confused.

I grabbed for one that floated by
and stopped it in its passing,
but it just winked and kept its course
and I heard the insects laughing.

Though they would have been in high esteem
for all their beauty and their worth
they chaotically spun vagrant now
against the etiquette of earth.

Sadly, I watched them go on
until I could not see
the way they hurried to the sun,
with no concern for me.

Even now, when I reach out,
things leap against my will;
what I find most valued
eludes, falling backward still.

Linda Patient

" Alone "

How potent a touch
thrilled her hand
left her momentarily
isolated,
as a thawing ice cube
in circular motion
floats upon its own
residue,
the feeling she gained
he'll never know,
with childlike curiosity
he brushed her cheek
hesitant in motion
and technique
his eyes then shied
as the victim turtle
crouched in shell
the feeling he gained
she'll never know
we laugh alone
live alone
love alone

Laurie Beland

Hollow-bodied Woman

I've come to believe that I was born with a hole in my heart, and throughout my life I've tried to fill it. Women, money, and booze had their place in this hole; but that was only temporary satisfaction. I wanted to heal it. I needed something or someone to give me that long lasting warmth that one can only find in security. After discovering this one day, I decided to find a new breed of woman.

I can still remember the first time that I laid eyes on her. I had spent hours looking over others with patience but she caught my eye. I held on and indulged in her aged but crisp complexion, she enveloped me. I reached up in a dreamy cloud and lifted her down into my arms. I caressed her neck as the light glimmered across her body reflecting energy. That luring energy shot through my heart. Not only was she unmistakably pleasing to the eye, but her scent was unbearable. Almost edible. She emitted an old, rich soul, the kind that you smell in your grandma's attic. I was in love and it was then that I knew that I was going to spend the rest of my life with this guitar.

Months slipped by as I educated myself on how to handle her effectively. I soon learned that I could express my pent up feelings by creating certain sounds with her, and from that I could receive mature satisfaction. For instance, I could sit hazed in an emotion with her in my arms and pull through a song. I'd pour my heart into it and upon ending the song, the notes would echo leaving me healed. We understood each other on our own plain of comprehension. How addictive.

Not only could I share therapy with her, but she'd voluntarily take on personality. My hands would take position on her but her voice would ring through the narration. She had range, too. Everything from an endless curl, to a harmonic hum that would tone through her; harnessing every grain of her dynamic wood. She produced colors that weren't even in the rainbow and which my hyper fingers couldn't keep up with.

Sharing her presence with others was always fun. I have many friends who also choose guitars as lovers; we tend to stick together. I can sit down with one of them, begin a song, finish and say "goodbye". This all takes place with only one tool of communication, the guitar. If I have something that I want to express, I play him a riff filled with my message, and he'll know exactly what I'm talking about. It's a universal language shared by all guitarists.

Sometimes it's nice though to play for someone who has never been experienced before. I enjoy catching their virgin ears, arousing them, taking them on a slow journey laced with tease, and finally bringing us all sharply to a climax leaving that person with a breathless smile. Sedation at its best. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

My guitar has been under my wing for quite some time now. I've had countless moments with her where we've stopped time to let the music swallow us. These ecstatic moments couldn't be synthetically reproduced or written down in sheet music. They're mine. Harnessing her magic and exploring her voice was and always will be untouched. On top of all of that, I've learned that it's not the guitar that can fill that hole inside of me. The energy which I can tap into while playing can be found only in me and it fills that hole quite well.

a thousand times

a thousand times
i have killed you a thousand times inside
i have gotten my revenge safely.
i have seen the good
in people,
and the bad,
but i can see no
good in you.
there are animals
that are more human than you.
have you once thought
back and regretted
a thing?
probably not.
i have killed you a
thousand times inside.
but you haven't died
in my mind.
it is a fine scar
you have left on me,
inside and out.
i have killed you a
thousand times inside.
please die.

laura dufresne

Reversed Roles

I sat at the kitchen table drinking tea, staring out of the window, and enjoying the luxury of being alone; or so I thought. Heavy footsteps were descending the attic stairs. My head turned to catch a glimpse of a young man opening the dryer door.

The developed masculinity quickly captured my attention. His hair was freshly cut and combed, and looked pretty good. His glasses gave him a distinguished older appearance. There was a vague familiarity about him, but I could not put my finger on it. Maybe it was the way he carried his large frame or his mannerisms when he spoke; but I do not think I ever viewed this person before. His demure appearance charmed me as he stood there quietly folding his laundry. My staring must have embarrassed him because he spoke to break the silence.

"How's school?"

"I like it, it's different."

"Tim and Mike said they were behind you when you were driving to the Mount Wednesday. They said you were going eighty and swerving in and out of cars."

"Oh," I said sheepishly, feeling guilty and off guard. "Was that them in the red car?"

"Yea. Why were you going so fast?"

"I had a rough morning, I didn't want to be late," I answered with an excuse he had often given me.

"Class is not worth killing yourself over," he said smugly, a new attitude for him. Was I being lectured?

"Ma, do you have any "Fleetwood Mac" tapes?" Good he changed the subject.

"Isn't that a little mellow for you?"

"Sue said they're not bad and I may like them. I've been listening to a lot of old stuff."

"I can get you a couple of tapes, but David, I have to have them back. Speaking of tapes, can I borrow your Metallica tape? There's a song I'd like to record for myself."

The curious look he had made me think he might fall over.

"When did you listen to them?"

"I was studying in your room because it's quiet up there. I put on your stereo and that's what came on."

Politely he answered, "Okay, but I'll need it back for school tomorrow."

"No problem." I was studying his ear. "Where is your earring?"

"I let it close a long time ago! They won't let me wear it at work."

I quietly said, "Oh." I decided I had better pay closer attention to his physical appearance. He seemed rather insulted I hadn't noticed before.

"Well, I'm going for my walk now." I got up from the table.

"Dressed like that?"

"Dressed like what? What's wrong with the way I'm dressed?"

"You have jeans on."

"So! I always walk in jeans!. I've never heard of getting all dressed up to go for a walk!" I was becoming extremely agitated at this line of questioning, but I was saved by a knock at the door. "Ah, the other partners in crime." Two of his friends entered the room.

"Hi Mrs. C," said the extremely handsome Tim in his charming way.

I looked at his ear. "Where is your earring?"

"It's been gone for a long time!"

"I don't know what's coming over you guys. You're acting too responsible and mature for me."

"Speaking of maturity," said Mike boldly, "that was us in the red car you were splashing water all over, you know, when you were going eighty!"

Tim added, "I didn't think a Caravan could go that fast."

"It's my car, it can do whatever I want it to," I flatly stated, feeling another lecture about to begin. Somehow I was going to sneak out of this situation.

What a scene of domestic tranquility. Three young men discussing their budgets, work schedules, school papers, and folding laundry. Responsible mature young adults.

I left them with this thought. "I'll see you guys later. Please write down any phone messages. You never know when some great looking, available guy will call for me!"

Three faces dropped their mouths open, then shook their heads. Quickly, I made my exit out the door, and chuckled at the reversed roles.

Cynthia Salmond

The Vodka Haze

The piss of life travels through my veins

Staggered speech

Vomit caked hair

A stench hovers above

A rot festers within

Where is the cure?

Melting into fermented madness....

Saturated in its fruit....

Vats of insanity stew deep inside

Grains build a wall

Facade

Memories lost in the blackness

Redemption sought, empathy is lacking

Where is the cure?

The happy mortician quietly awaits

in his hand is held a bullet-filled glass

Donna Langlais

Robbing Peter

Peter shuffled into the kitchen, quickly grabbing the coffee decanter that he'd placed in the drainer the night before. He filled it with warm water and poured its contents into the coffee brewer. He looked at the clock: 7:45 a.m. Good, he thought. When Robert comes out, it'll be ready for him.

He scooped up the black grounds carefully, staring at them in the little yellow plastic cup. They looked strangely like soot; a practical joke played by the man in the grocery store, who he imagined was having great fun making people pay for something he scraped from an old stove pipe.

Peter smiled, inclining his head as he considered it. Sure, he nodded. It would be easy because the store-man could mix just a little bit of real coffee in, and it would still smell like coffee, and it already looks like coffee, only it's just old soot with maybe some dirt added in to make it grainy-like. Maybe it even tastes like coffee and the store-man can laugh some more and keep making it that way, putting it in the can and all.

Georgia came out of her room, waddling straight for the bathroom. She had to get there before Donald got up and took all of their time, making breakfast late and the staff yell.

Donald was already up. But he was staring at Peter, stuck in mid-motion, coffee scoop in hand. He pointed to it.

"It goes in the coffee-maker. Why don't you put it in the coffee-maker?"

His reverie broken, Peter stared angrily at Donald. "I know what to do with coffee! This is my job. I know how to make coffee!"

Donald simply turned toward the refrigerator, opening the door with inordinate care, slowly reaching for the carton of milk. Sure of his grasp, he brought it out cautiously, shutting the door.

He reached into a cabinet, glancing once over his shoulder, to see if Peter was making the coffee, and then began taking out boxes of cereal. He had every one out, when he looked around helplessly.

"There's no more Cherrios. I gotta tell staff there's no more. I bet Georgia ate 'em all."

By now Georgia emerged from the bathroom, freshly showered, hair damp, and fully aware of the accusation.

"I did not-I did not-I did not!" she cried, stamping her feet angrily.

"Bet ya did, I bet," continued Donald.

Georgia began screaming denial, her agitation dragging Bill, the overnighter, from the staff room, and away from mountainous paperwork.

"Hey, Georgia, C'mon--!"

Simple almond eyes turned to the staffer, fearing punishment.

"I didn't, I didn't! Dom-nald say I did, but I didn't!"

The staffer saw the boxes on the counter, with Donald standing beside them; Peter was minding the coffee maker. It didn't matter that the machine was fully capable of its duty unmonitored. Georgia was still upset, and vocal. "Ok, Georgia, calm down. What's a matter, Donald, no Cherrios today?"

"Somebody ate them all."

The staffer frowned, shaking his head at his thoughts. I'll have to remind him again. "Donald, they've been gone since yesterday, remember? When we get the food money tomorrow, we'll buy some more, Ok?" He turned next to Georgia. "C'mon, Georgia, get the clothes you laid out for workshop and then you can eat some breakfast."

Acquitted, Georgia returned to her routine, staring straight ahead.

Peter, still facing the brewer, turned only his eyes to the young staffer. Bill's mad, he thought. He's got his hands on his hips. That's always how he stands when he's mad. If we act up and he has to keep one of us home, he'll miss class and be real mad. If I'm quick, I'll have the coffee ready an' no one'll be late.

Bill watched as Donald painstakingly selected another cereal. He gently shook it out into the bowl, poured his milk on it and sat down to eat. Satisfied, Bill walked over to Peter, who was now pouring the coffee for the household.

"What's up, Pete?" He said, casually.

Peter did not look up. He seldom allowed smart people to look him in the eyes. They'd see everything then. And he couldn't bare that.

"You're doing your usual good job," Bill prodded.

Peter smiled a little. "Gotta make sure." He pointed to a fifth cup, his cup. "This one's for Robert," he said, proudly.

Bill frowned. This isn't gonna set well with 'im, he mused. "Uh, Pete, Rob's sick today. He couldn't come in."

Peter stood very still.

"He's just got a bad cold. He'll be in tomorrow."

Peter's thin frame was immobile. Tomorrow? Why did he go and get sick? My special mug--a surprise and all....

But all he said was, "Ok." He'd said it so softly that Bill almost missed it.

Peter watched the staffer's blond head bob in acknowledgement, and Bill left him to check on Georgia's progress.

The blue and white van that pulled up to the Residence had to honk only once. Peter was first out the door, his old overcoat practically drowning him in the crisp air. Georgia plodded out after, her new coat a proud pink raiment to show off to the driver. Donald was not far behind, a small, doting figure gingerly crossing frosted blades of grass.

Bill waved after them; he would soon be in class. For Peter, it was another day on the job; workshop for the others.

The van parked beside an old red building in the town's revitalized, main street district. What once had been an old shoe factory now made wooden furniture. It was the other half of Peter's universe. Here he was a "jack of several trades," having learned everything from sanding and staining to cutting lengths of maple on the radial arm saw. That was his favorite job. He went to the dusty bench, carefully hanging up his coat and donning goggles before turning on the saw.

"Cut lumber," he muttered to himself. He loved to start a day with that statement. The long, rough maple on the racks behind him just begged to be cut into lengths others would mill and fashion into chair legs. He'd been at this job a year now, and it still felt like new.

The foreman watched him work awhile and then walked over, grabbing Peter's eye with a wave of his dusty green cap.

"Peter!" he called, smiling. "Whatcha doin'?"

Peter turned off the saw and grinned. He looked up a little, just enough to see the foreman's dimpled chin. He liked Mister Fergeson. A lot.

"I'm cuttin' lumber," he replied. He couldn't say it without smiling,

either.

Ferguson shook his head and held out a Danish. "Jullie packed an extra one, but," and he patted his middle, "I should cut back and share."

Peter sighed softly as Ferguson dropped the pastry into his outstretched hands. "Wow, thanks, Mister Ferguson!"

The stocky foreman shook his head at him. "Peter, when are you gonna learn my first name? I know you know it. It's Ok, you see Stu over there, sweepin' up like you used to do. He even calls me Stan. In this shop, ever'body's the same."

Peter looked back at the saw, staring at his thoughts. Why'd you go an' say that, Mister Ferguson? I know Stu is like me an' all, but it feels funny when you got a smart boss. I'll never be just the same as you.

Ferguson waited a bit, but Peter never spoke. After joining the company as foreman, he'd talked the owner into hiring the disabled when this place opened seven years ago. Peter was the "experiment" that sold ol' man Richards on the idea. No one could handle a mop and broom better. It was Ferguson who got him promoted. Three times.

The foreman leaned forward, resting his hands on the bench, intently eyeing the young, bowed head. "Pete, who noticed that you've got quick hands? You've learned a lot here. The folks at the agency are real proud of you, just like we are. Nobody would 'a thought you could handle that saw, but you asked and you learned, and now that's your special job. That's how we all do it. That gives you the right to be one of the guys."

"Ok, Mister Fergesen."

Ferguson bowed his head, then straightened. I do try. "Well, son, enjoy the Danish."

"Mister Ferguson, the rack's kinda low today. Won't last past noon. You want I should sand afterwards?"

The foreman eyed it and nodded. "Yeah, orders have been slacking off. Save the sanding for tomorrow. When you're done with that rack you can work the rest of the day on your project."

Peter could hardly believe it. He was the only person he'd ever shown it to. It was only right, since Ferguson made a gift of that woodcarving set six month ago. Peter learned to carve tiny tables and chairs at first, which were as hard to assemble as they were to sand. Robert went on and on about them, how perfect they looked, and Peter proudly mailed them to his little niece, Lorrie, for her doll house. He still waited to hear from them. They'd promised to come visit him last spring, then they promised it wouldn't be later than summer, but fall was already here and they hadn't decided just when they could get away.

This was his most ambitious project. Every day he labored on it, delicately carving the box that he'd fashioned with his own hands. It took two and a half months of lunch hours and breaks to cut and fit the pieces of the box together, sanding it as smoothly as he knew how. But he frequently put it aside when his embarrassment overtook him. It wasn't like the ones he saw in the malls.

The driver had just stopped in front of the Residence when Peter ducked out of the van and bounded down the long driveway. The staffers watched it all from inside the house. It was a daily afternoon ritual. Stop the van, let Peter dive out and watch his straight black hair chase him all the way to the mailbox.

He ran excitedly back to the house, his fist crammed with papers. He could read a little, and could sign his name, but the plethora of legal papers were beyond him. He practically broke the door down in his rush, calling a staffer's name.

"Gloria! Gloria! I got mail! Maybe a letter!"

Gloria was soft-spoken, brown-haired, and not very tall. If she pretended not to hear him, she could make him come close enough to glimpse his guarded black eyes. She was assigned the responsibility of "advocacy" for this "client."

John, the other afternoon staffer, was a sober, dark-haired southwesterner. He learned long ago to stay well out of Peter's line of charge. He retreated to the living room, knowing Peter would target the staff room with his zeal. Gloria heard him coming, and braced herself for the inevitable.

"See! There's a letter here, but I can't read it too good."

She took the pile he offered and raised an eyebrow. "Well, look at this! Peter, you do have a letter here. We've waited a long time for this one!"

"We gotta show it to Robert! Their gonna come, I know they are! I can cook that night, and they can sleep in my room and--"

Gloria set the pile aside and gave him a stern look.

Peter blinked, incredulous. "Open it! Let's read it!"

"Peter, your brother took a long time to answer since you sent that package. You mustn't get your hopes up."

"They're coming! They promised! They've just been real busy, that's all. I could show them where I work, an' my job on the saw an' take 'em bowling with all my friends, and even Donald and Georgia could come out with us when I buy 'em dinner."

"Peter--"

And Robert will be so happy 'cause he said they prob'ly were too busy but they'll be here and he'll get excited, too, an--"

"Peter!"

Peter looked down, staring at Gloria's patent leather shoes. He liked her shoes; they were so small, compared to his own. He imagined that little people with tiny hands and tiny machines sewed them together, painting them with glossy paint so they'd shine like fine lacquer. He didn't see many people with Gloria's shiny pink shoes and he began to wonder what the shoe painters did with the leftover pink lacquer.

"That's a little better. Now, do you want me to read it to you?"

He nodded, his eyes watching her hands as they picked the letter from the pile and carefully opened it. Her lilliputian fingers extracted the letter and she held it up, scrutinizing it. He noticed that her nails were pink today and decided that there was no better use for leftover shoe paint but to bottle it up and sell it as nail polish.

"Dear Peter," and she held her breath, "I'm sorry to say that things have been really busy here. Work is pickin' up and Darlene says this place needs a good fall cleaning. You know how it is, there's always something that needs doing. Lorrie is fine, she's in the fourth grade now. She's so big you wouldn't know her.

"Anyway, I'm sure you're busy too, and we'd just be in the way of the staff there. Glad to hear about your job. I bet they brag on you.

"Well, take care of yourself and tell your friend Robin 'Hi' for us. Love, Steven."

Peter stood quietly, hands limp at his side, face bent low enough that Gloria could see where his hair swirled on the back of his head. He started to speak, in a voice so soft she had to strain to hear him.

"It's Robert. His name's Robert."

She bit her lip, and fought back a tear. "I'm sorry, Peter."

Sorry, he thought. Bet they didn't like it. It was stupid to send them little furniture. I'll never be able to make anything good enough. There's always someone who can do it better.

"They tried to be nice," he said aloud.

She rose and touched his arm, and quickly left the room.

John had Donald and Georgia attending to laundry and cleaning chores. He saw Gloria storm into the living room and followed her. He passed by the staff room and saw Peter still in it, shamed and still. He went into the living room and located a chair opposite his workmate.

"Family?"

"Couldn't prove it by me!" she snorted.

He leaned his elbows on his knees. "They're not coming."

"They're not coming and they didn't invite him over, either!" She threw her hair back over her shoulder and focused on John.

"They live an hour away. An hour, for pity sake!"

"You'd excuse 'em if they didn't?"

"NO! There's no excuse for not sharing his life! They didn't even thank him for his gift! John, he does good work! He's got talent, but they don't even encourage it!"

"They send him a little money pretty reg'lar."

She sighed heavily. "I'm not saying they don't care, I'm just asking who has the real disability here! For pity's sake, they make him feel worthless. Do you know how long it took us to convince him to show us what he could do?"

"Gloria, you're not new to this--"

"You're right, John. Now I should go into the 'let's pretend it doesn't hurt much' act, 'cause some of the clients are worse off. Well, I don't buy it. Is there some rule that says you aren't allowed to suffer if someone has been stabbed twice as much as you have? It's still terminal, John. Death by ordeal or death by slow torture. It's all the same."

Silenced, John stared at the floor. Gloria turned her head to the door and noticed a shadow passing by.

"Uh-oh, John--" and she got up, heading out of the room.

Peter was in the kitchen, cleaning the sink. His strokes were elaborate arcs, and he scrubbed the sides of the sink with harsh vigor. He felt Gloria's blue eyes on him, but he would not turn around. He even noted the sound of John's stiff boots on the hardwood floor. The clicking of his heels stopped before he crossed the room and still Peter scrubbed the sink.

Pity. Gloria exuded it, and John reinforced it. Peter's thoughts were damning grumblings, harsh assaults on his brain. Poor dumb man. Poor dumb, stupid man, whose best ain't good enough. Robert says it's not my fault; just born that way; that I'm still special. I don't see how. There'll always be someone who can do it better. They're just being nice.

The rest of the day was uneventful and Peter rose the following morning to execute an unalterable routine. He scooped out the coffee and set out the mugs.

Bill said nothing to Robert, who had come in fighting congestion. He looked over at the mugs and was surprised that they were all the same, even the one reserved for Robert.

Must be ticked at 'im for gettin' sick on him yesterday, Bill mused. He shrugged and left Peter to his duty.

Robert noticed Peter's unusual quietude and prodded him.

"Everything Ok, partner?"

Peter just nodded. "I do my job," he said, finally.

"Nobody runs that percolator better," the staffer replied.

Peter said nothing, Robert was being nice.

Morning break saw Peter looking through the trade magazines piled on Fergeson's desk. He studied the pictures with particular care.

"Gonna build a mansion, Peter?" Fergeson jibed.

Peter eyed his chin. "It's Ok to look, isn't it?"

The foreman chuckled. "Of course it is, look all you want."

He got up and left Peter to his "reading." Peter focused on the elaborate handiwork of a rosewood carving. It reminded him of a picture he'd seen on Mister Richard's office wall. It had been taken from a woodcut hundreds of years old, with horses and strange riders. Fergeson said it was done by a genius who called it "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." He let the magazine drop as he thought of the picture.

The detail replayed itself through Peter's mind. The work of a hand at once forceful and lithe, the power of its grandeur struck at something deep inside him. He felt his eyes glaze over and got up quickly, returning to his bench.

He carefully retrieved the box he'd stashed on a shelf underneath and unwrapped it, disappointment renewed. The horses rode on in their power, and the simple carvings he had attempted were trodden.

He rewrapped the box and shelved it, robbed once more. There was no thought, no outcry. Only thunderous dust clouding his vision.

S. Langley

Absolute Soul

Trees flow
The wind, it does blow
Clouds, they do pass
-----Illumination
 pervades windows of thought
 far traveling legends sought
In an instant, courage
In a day, victorious
In a century, immortal

In a search through light
 there is pause
 lending perspective
Consider, there is a circle
Acknowledge the inside
 found not by chance
 such as something once unknown,
 but through pure soul!
-----That which is already owned

It is absolute
 so it is that it persists
The nature of choice devours
consuming, growing, reavealing--concealing
 The wit of soul revives the mind in time

A maze this passage
 confusion abounding,
A draft, through haze breathes light, it shall filter
 A soul is strong, yet a soul can whither

A circle that grows
 knows not the end

Dave Bergeron

The Word Balloon

The summer of 1978 was not the usual summer, for me, anyway. I was very sick that summer. So sick that I could barely walk at one point. The pain was often insufferable.

That July I was hospitalized. Placed in a room, alone, on quarantine so that I could not infect the other children with my sickness.

The days were long and I often found myself with nothing to do. Oh sure, I had a television in my room, but no cable. Nothing was on in the afternoon but soap operas, and they were an insult to my seven year old mind.

With nothing to do I usually was bored and could not concentrate on anything besides the 95 degree heat in my unairconditioned tomb.

This, however, all changed one afternoon when my father gave me a gift. My parents had given me many gifts during my hospital stay but none of them meant as much to me as this one. It was a stack of comic books.

This gift may seem hum-drum to some. But to me it opened up a whole new world.

Whenever I wanted out of my caged inferno all I had to do was pick up a copy of Spiderman and there I was, battling the Green Goblin above the New York skyline; or perhaps I was Batman, lurking in the shadows, waiting to surprise an unsuspecting rapist or mugger.

Often, I would find myself being an average Joe named Archie, cruising with my high school buddy, Jughead, through the streets of Riverdale in search of some typical teenage fun.

These comic books made me anything, from a superhero to a teenager, from a soldier, dying for his country, to an explorer of other worlds. I was anything these pulp-paper pushers made me. But I did not mind. I just let them take control.

Eventually, I was released from the hospital just in time for the start of school. And as I sat in my second grade classroom that fall, I often found myself bored by the teachers rambling on of how Mike and Mary are playing baseball with Van and Sue.

I myself had better things to read. So out of my desk and placed between the bindings of that insipid reading book, "Enchanted Gates," sat "Incredible Hulk no. 334," brand new, exciting, and for my eyes only.

Brian Rathburn

Nice

I walked into my Algebra class last week, took my seat, and as usual, turned to greet my neighbor.

"Hi, Melanie," I smiled. "How are you? I just love that sweater!"

Melanie smiled back at me tentatively, not quite meeting my eyes.

I turned back toward the front, sensing danger. Melanie and I had been acquaintances since the beginning of the semester, but something was wrong; I could feel it.

A short time later, a tap on my shoulder from Melanie made me turn to face the music, with a smile.

"Well, you're very friendly today," she whispered disapprovingly. "I'm glad to see you're in a better mood."

I was shocked, devastated, humiliated! What could she mean by that?

"Why, Melanie," I asked incredulously, "what do you mean by that?"

"Well," she explained haughtily, "you weren't very nice to me during our last class. You're usually always so nice, but you hardly smiled at all last time I saw you." She flipped her hair back and waited for an apology.

Of course, I did apologize; over and over and over again. Finally, Melanie accepted my repentance and restored me to the position of acquaintance in good standing.

Boy, was I relieved. I would have been jubilant, if only she hadn't used the word "nice." I hate that word. I've always been nice; nice manners, nice smile, voted nicest person in the 8th grade! I would much rather have had a case of early maturation like Betsy Gray in the 8th grade. The boys liked that new feature of hers more than they liked my nice personality. But no matter, I survived.

It's just that I still can't seem to shake this "nice" thing. Melanie is probably one of the few people who can attest to the fact that there may be a darker side to my personality; even if my darker side is only a light dusk.

Even my family thinks I'm "nice." Whenever there was a fight, I admit I did jump in and separate the swinging arms and legs, but that didn't mean I was nice. It was just survival--when my sisters were finished with each other, the champion usually went after me!

The incident in Algebra class continued to gnaw away at my niceness for the rest of that day. I felt a frown coming on, even though I remained smiling. Something had to be done about my reputation. For my own peace of mind, I had to stop being nice, no matter what!

First, I had to ask myself what made a nice person, well,...nice. I started with the dictionary. According to Webster, to be nice, one must be agreeable. Yes, definitely that was me. But I knew I could change that easily enough. The next time Susie what's-her-name asked me to move my elbow during a Psychology test, so that she could copy my answers without too much strain to her eyes, I would just tell her to sit next to Dave and copy from him. I'll tell her Dave is a genius. She won't know until it's too late that Dave is flunking Psychology! That'll fix her and I'll be well on my way to a new reputation.

Next my smile had to go. What kind of person smiles at perfect strangers anyway? They never smile back and when they do it's only because they think my smile is a verbal, permission slip to cut in front of me in line.

Once I get rid of the smile, and maybe (do I dare!) add a little snarl, the crowds will probably part to let me through. I'm sure that's what will happen.

Third on my agenda will be my manners. No more reading Miss Manners' column in the paper for me. Miss Manners is probably a cigar-chewing, foul-mouthed, bald-headed man anyway! Won't people be shocked, when the door I usually hold for them, slams back in their faces.

The possibilities for an end to all niceness are beginning to seem limitless. As I rub my hands together in anticipation of my new personality, I'm starting to feel better already! Oh no! I feel a smile coming on. Here I go again. Please, let me get that door for you, Melanie.

Eileen Allen

Doc Feldman

I watched him from across the hallway. He was perched on a stool beside his small patient, holding the boy's hand. He didn't see me. He wouldn't have seen me if I were two feet in front of him, so intently was he listening and talking to the boy.

It was 11 o'clock at night and he looked rumpled; but then, he always looked rumpled; short and kinda round and in need of a comb.

How many times have I called him late at night before racing off to the hospital with Christine gasping for breath? Pacing the floor, I would wait for his arrival. No one knew Chris like he did. He always came...She always cried.....He always told her what would happen next and how soon she'd be better. On the way out, he would squeeze my shoulder.

She's grown now. Sees another doctor. Takes care of herself. How odd; not until this moment did I realize that Christine wasn't his favorite patient.

Susan Phillips

America Revisited

Where is the America
That I remember?
The great mother who bore a
Small child from her womb
And shrieked and howled in pain,
Then smiled a mother-smile
Through her tears of childbirth.
She used to cradle me
In her arms and
Lull me to sleep with
Her sweet songs of innocence
Like lullabies .so
Sweet and serene and calming
Whispering like clothes
Playfully fluttering about
In the cool summer breeze.
There's a placidness
Like the purplish orange sky of
The setting sun
Just outside my window.

She would hold me tight,
Close to her bosom
And I would suckle
And suckle
And suckle.
That mother's milk so plentiful,
So refreshing
Nurturing me,
Giving me life.
Your delicious breasts
Sagged under the heavy burden
Of their tremendous weight.

America,
Now you're naked!
Your breasts are hanging out
For all to see.
I see your breasts America.
They're old and wrinkled
And empty.
They sag down to your knees.
You're an old hag,
A hasbeen.
There are a million starving,
Homeless, hysterical babies

Groping alone and afraid
In the dark,
Desperately searching,
But you have no milk left
To suckle them.
You're old and dried up and tired.
You've given up and
Given away all your goodies,
Your treasures
Like a gigantic birthday cake
And everybody takes a piece
Until all of your valuables are
Locked away and hoarded,
Lost to the selfish consumer.
You've given up on yourself America.
You're not some kind of commodity
To be bartered or
Bought and sold on the
Stock exchange.

America,
Do you remember when
You were needy?
You went to all of the countries
Of the world like they were
Some kind of Red Cross station or
Salvation Armies.
You went out like a small child
At halloween.
You went out with your
Gimmie bag,
Each time with a different costume,
Each time with a different disguise
And you took and you took and took and took
Smiling all the time.
You shrieked
"Trick-Or-Treat" at the
Top of your voice
And your trick-threat
Was war.
America,
You were so awe inspiring then.
So powerful,
So strong,
So majestic.
I was so proud.

America,
Do you remember when you were solid?
When you were made of iron and steel and sweat,
And thousands of hopes and aspirations
Built dreams,
Built miracles.
You built your masterpieces
When you were young and alive.
Now you're just a burnt-up,
Used-up shell
Of what you used to be.
Your mountains that stood so
Grand and tall reaching
Seemingly toward heaven
Were like monuments to God
They personified the strength
Of a mighty nation.
Now they're being landscaped for
Condominiums or
Strip mined for a few pathetic ounces
Of shiny, shiny
Silver and gold.

You're a vandalized car.
You're graffiti
Spray painted on the walls of
Underpasses of highways.
You're a run-down,
Condemned,
Tenement building
Decaying, rotting away
Filled with rats and cockroaches
And drug dealers.

You've sold the Brooklyn Bridge
For subway tokens
And U.S. Steel
Is working for Toyota.
Everyone has Toyota 4x4's.
They're everywhere!
In every parking garage,
On every street.
The executives at General Motors
Buy two of them for each of their children.
America,
You're a slick, hard, cold skyscraper
Covered with glass
Gleaming.

Is this your temple?
Your monument?
It is an insult to the sky,
To the clouds.
The heavens themselves
Rumble and shake with
Confusion.
You,
Were my mother America,
Until you went out to compete
In the foreign job market,
In foreign affairs.
You put on that unflattering
"Little man"
Ladies' business suit,
Complete with above the knee
Matching mini skirt
High heel pumps
And black stretch nylons.
You went international!
You're bigger than McDonalds
Or even Coca-Cola!
You've spent altogether too much
Time on your knees
Prostituting yourself
To the whole world.

You've given away your factories for
Political favors,
The flypaper of our generation.
You've torn down your foundries,
Your power plants
For plotical corruption,
Political gain,
The political machice has gone
Too long unoiled.
It's broken down.
It's dysfunctional
And everybody knows it.
But they sit like content cows
Mooring,
Grazing in a field of grass and clover
Their udders hanging low,
Filled up,
Almost bursting with milk,
But stagnant, wasting away.
The milk
Like ambition,

Lost, they stare pathetically
Out into oblivion.
Eyes glazed over marbles.
You've let big business
Dissect you,
Portion you out,
Divide you up like the
Sections of an orange.
Are you asleep America?
Your hands are bound
By thick, heavy cables
Of international conglomerates
Cutting into your wrists.
Or do you suffer from selective blindness,
Selective deafness?
Eyes, ears, nose, mouth
Covered by your own filth,
Like smog,
That shuts out sunlight and
Even the rain is black,
Sticky and dirty like pine pitch.
You've become a push-button society,
Where needs and wants can be
Satisfied at a touch of a
Remote control
And if you don't like
What's going on
You can always
Change the channel.

Where will your children work?
They're too ignorant to know how
To use a screwdriver or even
Hammer a nail into a piece of wood
Because you've cut the budget for education
Again.
And again,
And still yet some more
So that you can buy
A thousand more \$500
Toilet seat covers
From Germany or Japan.

We can't even sell our
Abundant supply of grain
Unless we grit our teeth,
Swallow our pride,
And bend over.

Meanwhile people in the
Appalachias' are starving.
Now you've disassembled our minds,
Along with our
Oil fields,
Our canneries,
Our churches,
To put up 100 more
K-Marts.
America,
I'm sick of your "name-brand" logic.
You're settling for the way things are
As if they could never change.
You settle for the lowest pay,
The yuckiest, blandest tasting food,
And stale; ordinary, mundane
Loves.
The problem is with you!
Like how you solve your drug problem.
First you ignore it
And hope it goes away,
Then you make it political,
Then you fight a losing war
With public service announcements
About frying eggs and saying no.
What can you offer the
Youth of America?
Say no just so that you can
Work for minimum wage at Burger King?
Drug dealers have better
Public relations than you do.

You've got 1,000,000
Starving
Homeless people,
(At least that's what you'll admit to)
And you feed them garbage.

Women get raped daily
And it's their fault for looking attractive.
Yet,
You protect the accused
While you offer up the victim
To the media like a
Strange sort of pastry.

You had a sacredness like Christmas.
All spoiled and gone commercial

And glittering and flashing.
America,
You've gone neon.

America,
People are starving and they
Go to church
Just to eat the communion wafers.

In a small town in Iowa
A child is crying
Because he didn't
Get a bike for christmas
Because
"Daddy got laid off from work."

I've got ~\$10
Invested in a
Soda machine
Yet still
I'm thirsty.
Somewhere,
Someone is washing windshields
Of cars for spare change
For another drink
So that he, too,
Like you,
America
Can forget.

Somewhere poets are
Crying themselves to sleep
Tired, hungry, unappreciated,
Starving for love.

America,
We're all in debt up to our
Collective asses,
But like you, America,
We're deficit spending.

Wake up, America!
You've been candy coated,
Like a bad tasting pill,
Made easy to swallow.
But that pill is getting bigger,
And bigger
Until it sticks in your throat.

You're coughing,
Gagging for air.
You're choking to death.
Don't die America!
I still love you, need you.
I want to believe again,
Spit it out.

Spit it out!

Lawrence D. Shepardson

The Walker

The woman walks up and down the hallway, her lips chewing out a pattern of words that are heard by and belong only to her. When she first passes by, I think that she is another visitor.

I am standing in the hall of a nursing home with my mother and sister, waiting for the nurses to finish attending to my aunt. That is when the woman passes by. She looks at us as though she may know us or know the feeling of visiting here, to wait between resignation and hope for the verdicts of doctors. She seems about to smile but when I smile at her, there is no change in her expression.

Her features and form are delicate without the frailty of the sick. She carries herself with a natural dignity, her posture straight and relaxed. The short brown hair frames a softly sweet face, a prettiness not lost from youth. She is tinged, but not obscured by, time. Her legs are as slender as a young girl's.

The brown and white checked dress looks to be made of a good cotton cloth, comfortable and always fashionable; a good basic dress. The short sleeves show the smooth pale skin of her arms.

What hints at something not right is the unchanging countenance of her mouth and eyes. Her face is not masklike but suspended rather, as though suddenly surprised; the look frozen there, unable to continue itself. It is held unblinking in her deep-set eyes, the color and sheen of glazed brown pottery, wide open, yet remote, like the surprise of someone who is self-possessed.

When she turns at the end of the hall the irregularity in her is more fully revealed. The slit in the skirt of her dress foams with the white folds of a slip not suited to its style. The back of her head burns white with a sprawl of scalp where her pillow has left the hair disheveled. It glares like a scar left by the battering of a thug who has chosen her to make his living from, stealing pieces of memory, leaving her unceasingly dazed.

As she passes by again, I notice her softly closed hands, the fingertips touching the thumb in the way that rosary beads are held. Her quietly pressed lips now release the unheard mouthings and she moves back up the hall and down again. In her gestures and the even adagio of her steps, she is reminiscent of those walkers at the shrine in Knock, who move around and around the holy place, fingering their prayer beads and murmuring their hope in a multitude of Hail Marys.

She moves up the hall again but now she is speaking to someone who moves with her, in a piece of an argument that has been waiting somewhere inside of her. She cries out, "Don't blame me! Don't blame me for everything!" It could have been some great quarrel or perhaps only a rebuttal to a bad day when petty annoyances bounce back and forth between household members and then are forgotten. But this accuser has ambushed her, left her still trying to vindicate herself.

Stopping at the heavy metal exit door, she bends slightly towards where the doorknob would be, but here is a heavy metal bar, and she yells through it, "I'll go with you. I'll go anywhere with you!" Someone is leaving her behind, forever leaving her or threatening to leave her behind, and that one threat is now hers forever.

Unexpectedly, she is Georgiana! A nurse walks by and without looking at her, gently admonishes her, "Go to bed, Georgiana." The nurse says this as though it is simply part of her nightly routine.

And now she is Georgiana, the name of a little girl holding tea parties for her dolls, the name of a young woman who is caressed in its sound by her lover's voice, the name of someone that is called out by friends happy to see her.

She does not heed the nurse's order. Instead, she continues to walk, but now in and out of the doorways of every room; like a slow-motion slapstick--now she is here, now there. Wandering, she will go down any corridor in case it may lead to something remembered, to some familiar place where she will know herself again.

There is no one who really knows what she remembers. No one can say if her life is now lived in a succession of moments gathered and strung like a garland, each flower fading before the next can be added, or if each memory is let slip through her mind as fingers holding beads release one to grasp the next. Her years could pass like a lunar month, her remembering waning into some final darkness.

I only know that she will still be walking through the corridors of my memory even as her own is slowly collapsing. She is, like those walkers before her and those wanderers to come, the mystery of what a person is that cannot be analyzed or dismissed or summed up. She is not simply a history lost to itself by a cruel disease. Somewhere from inside her she is always rising up, showing us what we are, what small unnoticed things become embedded in the soul and stubbornly hold us. In the quick haiku of her gestures and phrases are landscapes that can be closed off but never destroyed. She holds pieces of what has been said, of things done, that tell us what unsuspected power lies in our own daily intercourse with each other.

Georgiana is walking up and down the hallways.

Linda Patient

Postmarked

"We need to talk," she says, as she draws back her arrow. "I've been thinking," I know what that means, she lets go...fhfffttt...Bullseye; the little red center of my body starts to hemorrhage profusely. This is some kind of joke my jumbled mind told me. But now the joke is over and I have to think about what to do.

Without thinking about it I jump on the train to Boston the next morning, where I can get another one to who-knows-where. The whole ride I've got my face pressed against the window watching two vertical rivers continuously flow millimeters in front of me, from the harsh rain the night before. "This is so foolish, what are you thinking," I say to myself while I remain in my seat for the ride back home.

"I've got it." I climb to the top of my skyscraper, which happens to be a three-story apartment with an attic. In my right hand a 4-pack of Matilda Bay, in my left, my Chinese yo-yo, which I happen to know was invented by the Irish. I know that because it has green and white clovers all over it, and why would the Chinese put the Irish symbol on their thing. Anyway, I sit on the edge slingin' the yo-yo, swillin' the Bay's, and watching the angels spray paint the drizzly sky dark, dark blue while I read her evil letter over and over again.

It's time. "Goodbye, cruel world," I yell like I always do, then lift my heels and feel a great sensation. "Pooooo-ffffffffff" goes the giant air bag that I land on, perfectly placed in case I miss the hard, killing, backyard grass.

For some reason it didn't feel as good that time as it usually does. Disappointed, I pull the air bag away and climb back to the tipety-top of the skyscraper. A hundred thoughts violently swirl through my mind, like the wind would at 3,000 feet, as I read the letter again. "Goodbye," I say once more and crumple the letter. I then throw it down and watch it die.

Michael Monahan

Career Choice

When a certain student who had begun to study geometry under Euclid had finally grasped the first theorem, he asked his teacher, "But how will learning this profit me?" And Euclid said, calling to his servant, "Give the lad a quarter, since he's got to make a profit from what he learns."

People often ask me, when they first discover that I'm a classical scholar, what on earth had prompted me to take up the study of dead languages and why I'm wasting my time pursuing a career in archaeology, when I could put whatever talents I may have (and they are modest) to "better" use in the field of law, say, or medicine, where the big bucks are. Do I honestly believe there's money in Plato or Virgil? What archaeologist has ever gotten rich by digging up bones and old pots? Do Greek and Latin have any real value? Such questions are usually delivered in a tone which mingles disbelief with pity and not infrequently, or so it seems, contempt.

And yet, if the advertising moguls who dispense glitz and glamour from atop the concrete towers on Madison Avenue had not succeeded, with all the cunning of their subliminal trade, in converting American men and women from intellectual into commercial beings, I might be able to answer them convincingly enough. But as it is, since I live in a time when it is no longer man, or even a god, but money which is the measure of all things, the sole arbiter of our terrestrial destiny, and the very force which, as the song has it, makes the world go round, I fear lest, while trying to explain my position in terms of esthetic and personal satisfaction rather than of the almighty dollar, I risk being taken for a fool. And maybe I am.

But consider: Does a painter, unless a lust for cash and delusions of grandeur have completely robbed him of his sensibility, study his art and then put his brush to the canvas mainly with a view to getting rich? I grant he may get rich, even famous; but forbid him his oil and his easel and I suspect, if he is any kind of artist, he will be a very unhappy man, for all his wealth and fame. For it was the sheer love of art, not the ringing of a cash register, which lured him to that profession in the first place. He paints because he loves to paint. And does a connoisseur, if he is himself a true lover of art, frequent auctions in search of an old masterpiece merely for the sake of an investment? Is it not rather because he cherishes fine art and thinks nothing of putting out thousands, or perhaps millions, simply that he may have it to admire again and again, as the fancy takes him, just as a man in love will shower a beautiful woman with costly gifts that he may win her love in return and have her with him always? And just as it is a kind of erotic hunger that drives a man to seek out and possess his beloved, so it is an esthetic hunger that drives a connoisseur to seek out and possess a beautiful old painting, regardless of the cost, and he is enthralled with his discovery if, as I said, he is a true lover of art.

And so it is with me. This esthetic hunger, this craving for the shattered beauty of antiquity, is what compels and has long compelled me to the study of classical literature and the beauty. It is, if you like, a spiritual quest, a quest to transcend this modern world that daily grows more ugly, and recapture, if only at great distance and in fragments, something of the wonders of those pristine times, when men and women had no need of flashy cars or fat bank

accounts to quiet a soul's turbulence, but were able to sustain themselves with the fascination that they felt at their own humanity. And so for me the oft-repeated question, "Do Greek and Latin have any real value?" has no meaning, for how can you fix a price on that which is priceless? Unless, of course, the only color you perceive is green.

Joseph J. Brazauskas

It's a hot summer morning
I'm in the living room
Just sitting
My knees are drawn up to my chest
My hands are down by my side
My head is back and my eyes are closed
Just relaxing
Suddenly the back door noisily swings open
My father stumbles into the house
He's drunk
Again
He sees me and comes toward me
Dear Lord, what's he up to now?
He stops to stand in front of me
"Good morning," he says cheerfully
He runs his hands up the outside and inside of my thigh
A father isn't supposed to do this to his daughter
But my father does
His words and his deeds
They strike
They violate
They hurt
I struggle against the pain that strives to overcome me
But you know something?
The pain has lessened and my spirit is stronger
I'm winning!
I'm surviving!

Anonymous

Perhaps

He had his chair--I think perhaps he liked it best in the world.

He loved basketball and that is odd because, you see, he really didn't like black people.

Someone watching would think the kiss when he got into bed was demeaning. Something you would do to a child, not an old man of ninety-one, particularly, a crotchety old man of ninety-one. He accepted it for what it was--a token of affection, respect, and human contact.

I knew he was dead as soon as I awoke. I wouldn't allow that knowledge to be true. I fixed his breakfast, and kept going to his bedroom door and peeking in. He never moved. I knew he was dead yet I pretended he was sleeping. Finally, I went in to his room and looked, his face was frozen, pallid; gone was the powdery soft skin, and again, I knew he was dead. I turned on my heels; this time I believed and I walked through the living room, through his den, through the kitchen, avoiding his room, through the living room, through his den, through the kitchen, walking as if my life depended on it. Again I went into his room; this time I notice one leg is out from under the covers. Oh my God, had he called for help and I hadn't heard? Had he needed me and I wasn't there? I tried to put his leg back under the cover but rigor mortis had already set in. Finding the phone...dialing..."Deb, I think Grandpa is dead"..."It's O.K., don't worry...I'll be right there." Dialing..."Dr. Trow? Grandpa is dead"..."It's O.K. I'll be there shortly." Dialing..."Mom is Al home?"..."What's the matter dear?"..."I need to tell Al his father died this morning." "He's out doing errands, don't worry, I'll find him."

Please, make it that he hadn't called for help--perhaps he had gone into the bathroom and padded contentedly back to his room, and getting back into bed maybe his heart just gave out. He had gone to bed happy...the Celtics were winning...Kevin McHale had just sunk three hoops..he had smiled and struggled to stand up and said it was time. I had gone into his room with him, took off his slippers, hung his robe on the bed post...kissed him and said, "Good night Grandpa."

Deb came immediately and hugged me and said let's go in and see him. On the two sides of his bed we stood...Two months had turned into eighteen months and a cranky, less powerful man had learned to laugh and try new foods and to let two new people into his life. Deb reached down and closed his eyes, kissed his forehead and pulled the sheet over his head, giving his last rite of passage the dignity that his life had.

I had fought with him just the day before. We were at our wits end and didn't know what we could do. He had congenital heart disease and he wasn't getting enough oxygen to his brain. He was struggling with disorientation, continuity and short term memory. He couldn't get a fix on the days and the time. He was bull headed and wouldn't listen and found help so difficult to accept. We loved him, but the circumstances were so overwhelming. I had told him he would have to trust us and left him with the implication that if he wouldn't he would have to go back to the nursing home., Two mornings later he was dead.

Dr. Trow arrived and he signed the death certificate for 9:30 a.m. We both knew it had been substantially earlier.

Nothing is cut and dry. I will hold him in my heart for the rest of my life.

Carol came and she was shaken. She sat in Grandpa's chair and smoked; we waited for the funeral home people. I had never seen anyone smoke at Grandpa's, much less, while sitting in his chair.

Funeral home people have soft voices and they don't make any noise when they move. The silence that surrounds them only emphasizes the zipper on the body bag and the wheels on the litter.

Margaret Trafton

Modern Art

A line zigzags,
A color dominant,
A pattern created,
A bore to look at.

Next, a line resembling a tree.
A color mingling with another.
A pattern created,
A masterpiece.

The first one being in a museum.
The second, on my living room wall.

Jill M. Langdon

Two meditations

A reflection

I started taking care of him after I found out. He has terminal cancer and only a couple of months to live. My case is similar, but I have a couple of years.

I don't really know why I accepted this case. I guess I thought that it wouldn't bother me. I just wasn't thinking. How could it not bother, to see this reflection of my future, just wasting away.

He's always in such pain. He's like a baby now, needing to be bathed and dressed, remembering when he ate last, and not caring.

He was so much more alive when I first started working here. I have to bathe and dress him, so I see the bones becoming more prominent, and the flesh limply holding on.

I watch in horror as he sleeps, visualizing myself in his place. Just waiting. When he opens his eyes and looks at me, they're blank and hollow. Deep pits that have no end. And no beginning. Is anybody in there anymore? I don't really know. When does the soul leave anyway?

I'm beginning to see his face in my dreams; he's my doctor, giving me the bad news and when I wake up, those hollow pits are still in my sight.

I can't quit. His wife relies on me now. And maybe I'm just a bit curious to see the end. I just hope that when he leaves this earth, that he leaves my dreams too. I don't mean to sound callous, but you'd understand if you saw his eyes, reaching out, desperately trying to claw back into this life.

Of course, I could be overreacting. One too many horror movies maybe, but I don't think so. I think that there's really something to be afraid of there. Life, maybe, a reflection.

I'm the strong one

You can't see me like you think you can. I'm not who I appear to be. I may seem happy and self confident, with not a worry in the world, but that's all a lie. A facade. It's not me. That's who I pretend to be, in order to get through all of this with my dignity intact. Not my sanity, my dignity.

I have to be the strong one. I'm there when dad's sick, to lead everyone in the right direction. Dry the tears, lend the hope. I'm good. I should have been a psychiatrist, they all say. I just smile. I think myself through. Silently, oh never out loud! No one can ever know that I have any weaknesses!

At work, all of my clients need some cheer. Some hope that their lonely, bedridden live are still worth something. I give them that, "You always have a smile for me," they say. I don't care, I just don't feel the smile.

At home the bills pile up, and my husband tries again to be a self-made millionaire at some hair-brained idea and I'm always there, to boost his ego. Tell him that he has to fall a few times before he can ski down the mountain like a champ. "I'll get a second job," I say, "don't worry."

When is it going to end? I've never had a backrub. I've never cried on anyone's shoulder. No one's ever said to me, "Don't worry you work too hard. You deserve a vacation." No pat on the back for me.

Do I discourage it? Did I ever want it? Or who's supposed to give it? It makes me feel weak just thinking about it because I'm the strong one.

anonymous

today
I love you
but differently
from yesterday
when we danced under crystal tears
of a thawing tree

my inner smile
shimmered through
every vein
while your arms
held me
like steadfast
tree roots
feeding me
energy
courage
yesterday
I loved you
today
I learned from
you

Laurie Beland

The Great Pyramids

The great pyramids
How they persist
In securing
The quieting gestures
Of the tombs
Of great kings
Of the land

The great pyramids
How they attest to
The stillness
And silence
Huge mountains of earth
Placed there by
Throngs of men
Working endlessly

The great pyramids
Laboring in the shadow
Of earth's history
Of glowing suns rays
In constant desert heat
Securing the stillness
Of great sleeping kings
Through the ages of time

Frank Gaudet

A Dog's Hair

A beer too many the night before
Has caused me pain I can't ignore

The sound of a pin drop would explode my head
The sound of an alarm clock would leave me dead

My mouth is as dry as the straw in the nest
Of a robin; my eyes are as red as her breast

The last thing I remember I was smiling and tipping a glass
The contents of which, left me flat on my... back side

I began to teeter and started to spin
And landed face down still wearing my grin

I awoke to the sound of an ant on the floor
Walking on tip-toes in the house next door

I'm done with drinking, I'm finished all right
But, perhaps, some hair of the dog
that bit me last night.

Kevin Mooney

Safe Haven

I love it here! Here, I can think. Here, I can put together the frayed ends of my life.

This is a tough life. It seems many times that life insists on throwing only "the bad" at us: the bad relationships, the bad cars, the bad jobs, and the plain bad days. No matter how hard you try you just can't escape "the bad." You can, however, try to counteract these bad times with a little good. We all have those places where we recuperate--a place to escape "the bad" and experience "the good." I have one of those places, and I have a feeling it is a safe haven for many others.

I just love how cool this place always seems to be. No matter how hot the day, I always seem to remember it being cool here. Maybe it has something to do with the water rushing around. While I am here I frequently read. I guess reading helps take my mind away. But other times I come here to make my life's decisions. In either case, I guess it is just an act of regrouping. I think that my favorite feature of this place is peacefulness. It's always so peaceful, with only the occasional murmurs of the outside world. It certainly is a private place and I am sure that has a lot to do with its recuperative powers. I can rehash or expose my problems here. I can expose myself without worrying about the rest of the world seeing me naked.

But even though I seldom want to leave, I can't hide forever. I have my responsibilities. "Ziiiiiiiiip!" But I have pulled things back together again. "Flushshshsh!" At least for a little while, until I need to head for the bathroom once again.

Robert A Gates

To Punky

Death of a Friend

I can still feel the sun as I write.
I can smell the lilacs, I can feel
the breeze, I can hear the birds,
Is it dark, my friend?
I'll share my sunshine with you.
Does it smell musty, my friend?
I'll let the breeze carry the scent of my lilacs to you.
Is it too quiet, my friend?
Listen for the fall of my teardrops,
the rhythm of our heartbeats.

Rhonda J. Calvi

ALAN SNODGRASS

Inda Pils
Alana E. Bonaccora
Donna Langlois
Matt Pelish
Peter Valera '93
Kate Johnson
David S. Ryan
Carol Muelo
Laura L. Shobma
Kenneth G. Marussia
Meg Hillis
Ruth Ellen Black
Donna Couture
Dick Freeman
Stephany J. Fisher
John Bradley M. Hale
Hattie Hallam '92
Rodney Fay
John Bradley
Hattie Medema
Robert Martin Jr. Joe
Hon. H. Shane
Fen
Patty Ryker
Joe
Cindy Gauthier
Becky Stinson
The Colonel
USMC
Art Markey
John G. Johnson

11

Wm. Lloyd Garrison

Wm. L. Garrison

Wm. C. Hunter

Dear Mr. Holmes
 I have just
 received your letter
 of the 17th inst.
 and am glad to hear
 that you are well.
 I am
 Yours truly
 Wm. L. Holmes

~~Thank you
for your letter~~

[Handwritten signature]

1. *My mother*
 2. *My father*
 3. *My sister*
 4. *My brother*
 5. *My grandmother*
 6. *My grandfather*
 7. *My aunt*
 8. *My uncle*
 9. *My cousin*
 10. *My friend*
 11. *My teacher*
 12. *My neighbor*
 13. *My pet*
 14. *My favorite food*
 15. *My favorite color*
 16. *My favorite animal*
 17. *My favorite sport*
 18. *My favorite book*
 19. *My favorite movie*
 20. *My favorite song*
 21. *My favorite place*
 22. *My favorite time of day*
 23. *My favorite season*
 24. *My favorite holiday*
 25. *My favorite month*
 26. *My favorite day of the week*
 27. *My favorite fruit*
 28. *My favorite vegetable*
 29. *My favorite drink*
 30. *My favorite game*
 31. *My favorite hobby*
 32. *My favorite job*
 33. *My favorite profession*
 34. *My favorite animal*
 35. *My favorite plant*
 36. *My favorite flower*
 37. *My favorite tree*
 38. *My favorite bird*
 39. *My favorite insect*
 40. *My favorite animal*
 41. *My favorite plant*
 42. *My favorite flower*
 43. *My favorite tree*
 44. *My favorite bird*
 45. *My favorite insect*
 46. *My favorite animal*
 47. *My favorite plant*
 48. *My favorite flower*
 49. *My favorite tree*
 50. *My favorite bird*
 51. *My favorite insect*
 52. *My favorite animal*
 53. *My favorite plant*
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 91. *My favorite tree*
 92. *My favorite bird*
 93. *My favorite insect*
 94. *My favorite animal*
 95. *My favorite plant*
 96. *My favorite flower*
 97. *My favorite tree*
 98. *My favorite bird*
 99. *My favorite insect*
 100. *My favorite animal*

Robert R.

[illegible]

Jon Clark

Karen Cremling

Deborah (Nelson)

HZ Phil
Carmichael

Cheri Stone

Jenna Buzzell

Beauregard Rave
Sharon Lea
Christina Stewart

Johnna K. Glaser
Cory Albert
Sandy Rick

Kathy Archibald
Dave Swval
Margaret Albert

Pat Depew
Alenda D. Lee
Gary Stuykowski

Alfred Russell
Jay Bowers
Whittemore
Wayne Kendall

Brian Kogger
Caitlin Graves
Mavis
Margaret Villani

Diane
Nancy G. Smith
Melissa
Yulker
Hagood
Gylnas

Michael
Lee Corpused
Sirkka E. Hoglund